

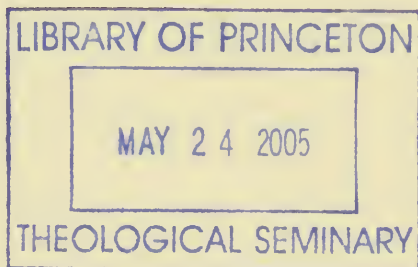
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ADDRESS

DELIVERED BEFORE THE

AMERICAN WHIG AND PHILOSOPHIC SOCIETIES

OF THE

COLLEGE OF NEW JERSEY.

JUNE 24th, 1849.

BY THE HON. JOHN THOMSON MASON.

PRINCETON:

PRINTED BY JOHN T. ROBINSON.

1850.

Extract from the Minutes of the Cliosophic Society.

Resolved, That a Committee be appointed to request of J. THOMSON MASON, Esq., for publication, a copy of the address delivered by him before the American Whig and Cliosophic Societies, upon Tuesday, June 26, 1849.

By order of the Society.

Extract from the Minutes of the American Whig Society.

Resolved, That a committee be appointed to return suitable thanks to the Hon. J. THOMSON MASON, for the able and eloquent address delivered by him before the Cliosophic and American Whig Societies, on Tuesday, June 26, 1849; and also to request a copy for publication.

R. S. FIELD, Esq.,
T. GEORGE WALL.
JOHN JOHNS, JR. } Committee.

ADDRESS.

BUT a few years have elapsed since my connection as a student with this institution ; yet when my mind reverts from the present scene to the period when I first entered College, a timid inexperienced youth, an exile from home and all its joys ; when I remember how I shrank from a participation in the new scenes which were about to surround me, and from an intercourse with my future unknown companions ; while on the other hand, I am now enjoying the thrill of pleasure which the memory of those very scenes and those very companions inspires ;—I can hardly realize that the boy whose happiness was to be seen only in the future, in a restoration to the pleasures of his home, is identical with the man whose chief joys are to be found in the memory of the past, in the recollection of college days, and all the delightful associations that cluster around that period of his life.

It will prove, my young friends, I fear, a fruitless undertaking, to attempt to impress your minds in any adequate degree with the true character of the results which follow the transition from the state of youth and tutelage to that of manhood and independence. During our connection with college, we are taught by others, and can rely with confidence upon the skill and wisdom of our preceptors in the instructions they impart. When we enter upon the world as men, we become our own

teachers, and must depend upon ourselves for the course we are to pursue. Indeed, at this period, self-reliance is regarded not only as a duty, but also as a privilege, and we view with impatience and displeasure any attempt to continue a system of restraint. Experience becomes the fountain from which we draw our lessons of wisdom.

Whatever may have been our previous advantages, and however assiduously and successfully we may have employed them, a knowledge of the world, of the motives which influence mankind in their intercourse with each other, the proper appreciation of human character, must mainly, if not exclusively, be acquired by experience.

When the young man commences life and finds himself, for the first time, thrown upon his own resources, amid the dangers, temptations and tempests, which all have to encounter to a greater or less degree, if he can realize that he is supported by sound moral and Christian principles, and that he has acquired the power of thought, of mental concentration, of drawing correct conclusions from ascertained facts, he has secured all the benefits, all the assistance, that education can bestow upon him. The soil is then fertilized and tilled, ready to receive the seeds of experience. The canvass is prepared to retain the touches from the pencil of nature's great artist.

You are, my young friends, about to take this important step; about to end your academic career, and at once to enter, as men and citizens, upon the great drama of human life; and you may regard yourselves happy indeed, if you are sensible of the true and profound nature of the change which must and will immediately take place in all your habits, pursuits and feelings.

Although the very general opinion, that boyhood and youth are almost the only seasons of happiness in this life, is erroneous, yet there are joys and pleasures of the most exquisite and refined nature, which are peculiar to those periods, and which we part with forever when we assume the more dignified offices of manhood. You will hardly have left this peaceful abode before you will fully discover, that in addition to the other ties which bind you to your Alma Mater, you will be attached to it by the recollection, that many a departed hope and joy of your youthful hours lies buried there; and as fond parents revisit the tomb of their offspring, and bathe the cold marble with their tears, so, my young friends, in after life, when disappointment has been experienced, when ambition has seduced you, when friends have proved false, and when even the sweet consolations of hope are gone, your heart will turn back to your college life, to the play days of your early years, to the bright visions and romantic dreams when life was new and hope was high, to find a refuge for a stricken heart in the memory of bygone days and cherished companions:

“To view the fairy haunts of long lost hours,
Blest with far greener shades, far fresher flowers.”

These pleasures of your youth are hereafter to be enjoyed only in memory. The hour has arrived for many to take their final leave of each other. The ties which have so long encircled you, are perhaps to be severed forever. The voices which have so often enlivened these halls with shouts of youthful merriment, will be heard no more. The warm, cordial, unaffected grasp of friendship has been felt for the last time. Gone, forever gone, are the companions and scenes of your college life.

It is a lesson of religion, in the truth of which we all acquiesce, that man's life upon this earth is designed by

his Creator as a mere state of preparation for an existence beyond the grave: and thus, in this elevated point of view, it may properly be said that our course of education commences with our birth, and ends only with our death; the acquisition of wisdom being the great object of human life. But the term education, as we propose to employ it on the present occasion, is designed to be understood in its popular sense, and to have reference exclusively to the period of our academic and collegiate course.

The great and leading design of education, as has already been intimated, is but a preparation of the mind for the reception and synthesis of facts drawn from reading and experience, out of which stores of wisdom are to be accumulated. Every youthful student remembers the feelings of impatience with which he entered upon the study of the dry, abstruse principles of a science to which he never in after life expected to refer. He could not comprehend why the acquisition of what he termed useful information was to be postponed for the theories of some dull and useless art; why he should plod over a conic section, or a satire of Juvenal, when his time could be so much more profitably employed in immediate preparation for the pulpit, the bar, the counting house, or whatever other pursuit he might intend to follow. Nor is this error confined to the youth and the student. Parents, impatient to see the early fruits of education developed in their children, hurry them on in their studies, regardless whether they have laid any enduring foundation upon which to rest their future acquisitions. As well might the husbandman ask, Why am I to spend my time and exhaust my strength in laborious efforts to furrow the soil and prepare it for the seed? While I am thus engaged, would not

the seed sown upon the ungenial surface be germinating and maturing? It is one of the greatest popular errors of the age, that we are to measure the fruits of a collegiate education by the amount of crude facts which a student is able to collect during his academic career. No inquiry is made as to what disposition the mind can make of these facts, after they have been thus acquired. Is it capable of analyzing or systematizing them? has it the power of building intellectual edifices out of this unshapen material? I have known young men to graduate from this and other institutions, carrying with them the highest honours of their class, yet liable to the taunts of those who sneer at this system of mental discipline, because, perhaps, they were ignorant of that shallow historical and literary gossip which a month's intercourse with the frivolous circles of fashion would enable any one easily to attain. During our passage through college we observe, that while some of our associates are toiling over the dull and severe studies of their class, others are devoting their time and attention to the pages of fascinating history, and the works of light literature, romance and poetry. At the end of their collegiate course, the latter are denominated gentlemen of accomplished education, while the former are regarded as mere plodders, who have passed their time in unprofitable labor. We do not by any means condemn the study of history or of lighter literature at proper times and on fit occasions; nor do we contend that the ends of education have been wholly accomplished by a thorough disciplining of the mind. "This ought you to have done, and not to leave the other undone." The expressive language of scripture, a part of which I have just cited, is as applicable to the obligations of the student, as it is to those of the Christian. Severe

mental discipline is to the student what "the law, judgment, mercy and faith" are to the Christian, while we may well class the practice of cursory reading in the one with what "mint, anise and cummin" are to the other. This system of mental training in a high degree invigorates the power of concentration, of fixing the attention, which is a noble faculty of the mind; it excites the power of discrimination, ripens the judgment, quickens the apprehension, gives activity and acuteness to the understanding, while at the same time it brings all its powers into complete discipline. Without this solid foundation, how slender are all our future superstructures; without this mental culture, how meager are our future intellectual products! We may justly compare the mind of a youth thus well trained, to the fertile, well prepared fallow field, which presents to the eye of the casual observer an unseemly appearance of barrenness and desolation. On the other hand, the intellect which has been decked and ornamented by the flowers of light reading, is like the untilled field, which, undisturbed by the coulter and the share, under the influences of the genial sun and refreshing showers of early spring, is covered with verdure and adorned with bright but short-lived flowers. Seed sown upon the one, which by culture has within its bosom the elements of fertility and life, germinate, shoot and mature, and in the autumnal season yield an abundant harvest. The other soon surrenders its rich dress to the influences of a burning sun, and long ere the summer months have passed, its early promise of fruit has faded. Seed, thus sown, "when the sun is up are scorched, and because they had not root they wither away." The effect of time, that great and severe test of all things, is the same upon the human mind; and unless we stand firm upon

this vantage ground, the difficulties with which we shall have to contend in our future intellectual pursuits will be incalculable. Without this buckler we must at some time falter, if we do not fall. How many naturally brilliant intellects have been ruined, through a disregard of this principle of education, and by vicious early instruction! How easily does this error lead the young mind into careless habits of thought, which cannot be laid aside, and which utterly incapacitate it forever afterwards for mental labour.

When the mind has thus been brought into complete subjection, the recitation rooms and lecture halls have performed their high functions. All has been done for the youthful mind that parental solicitude or exorbitant public sentiment could demand. At this epoch, your destiny must be committed to your own keeping. Unavailing, however, indeed will the efforts of your instructors prove, if you place your main reliance for success in after life upon what they have done for you, regardless of the obligations which society and religion impose, to redouble your exertions to reach the heights of fame and usefulness. The work of endeavouring to attain human perfection, which should be the great end and aim of man's existence, must be resumed by yourselves where your preceptors have left off; and unaided by their assiduous attentions, wise counsels, and erudite instructions, you must go on in this noble and upward enterprise.

The simile which I have already employed to illustrate my view of the subject may be carried still further. It is not enough that you prepare the soil for the seed. Although the most diligent and laborious efforts may have been used for that purpose, and although the earth may invite by its richness the husbandman's notice, yet

all this will be unavailing unless the seed be afterwards actually sown and assiduously cultivated. It is one thing to train the budding faculties of the mind for severe exertion, and another to store it with useful information. For the one we mainly depend upon tutors and schools, for the other we must rely exclusively upon ourselves. Education in our schools and colleges is but the means for acquiring knowledge; the information, which we subsequently gather, when stored in a well arranged mind, is knowledge itself:

“He cannot be a perfect man,
Not being tried and tutor'd in the world.
Experience is by industry achieved
And perfected by the swift course of time.”

While education is thus expending its energies upon the mind, another and a more delicate and important field is opened for its operations, in the moral and religious culture of the student. And here we may remark is a duty imposed upon education which at once involves all the most sacred responsibilities which attach to the parent, the teacher and the pastor, on the one hand, and the son, the student and the Christian, on the other. All the illustrations, all the figures which could be invoked, for the purpose of representing conditions of weakness, of helplessness, of destitution, of insufficiency for accomplishing any noble enterprise, would prove inadequate to give an idea of the futility of man without morality and religion. A vessel at sea without a rudder; a house built upon the sand; a tree without a root; the trembling dew drop, glittering in the rays of the rising sun; the fleeting glories of the butterfly, are common-place but strong illustrations; they are too feeble, however, to convey the idea of a man “having no hope, and without God in the world.”

The first and great field, then, of education is the

heart, the second is the mind; and these are so indissolubly connected, that in cultivating the one, you almost necessarily improve the other. Good moral training strengthens the mind, and all truths in science, in history, in nature and experience, when viewed in connection with the great Author from whom they emanate, are eminently calculated to develope and to elevate the religious and moral tendencies of our nature. An opposite doctrine, I am aware, has been impiously advocated. But would it not be deemed out of place and supererogatory at this enlightened period of the world, and upon this hallowed spot, so often sanctified by the embrace of Science and Religion, to attempt an argument against the opinion that there is often to be found a conflict between the doctrines revealed in the word of God, and the discoveries of science? What would be thought of the bold and reckless adventurer against truth, who would attempt at this day to array the discoveries of Copernicus, or Newton, or La Place, or Davy, or Franklin, or Fulton, or Morse, or Henry, in an attitude hostile to the great truths of revelation? Who are these men whose intellects have thrown such a flood of light upon subjects which hitherto had remained in impenetrable darkness, and revealed to common minds principles which before were wrapped in mystery? They are the creatures of Him, whose great and sublime code of moral law is said to be shaken and often dismembered by their discoveries and expositions of the laws and principles of that nature, which like themselves emanates from the one Great Source of power and harmony. Every flash of their genius, every effort of their mind, every scintillation of their brain, is but the pulsation of the Great Heart of Nature, which is God himself, the mere result of his will. And yet we

are called upon to believe either that the Bible is a fiction, the work of man's invention ; or the absurdity that God has endowed certain created beings with transcendent intellects, as compared with their fellow-men, merely for the purpose of exposing his own folly and weakness, and that he was capable of creating men with minds sufficiently powerful to discover discrepancies between revelation and the works of nature which He himself was not wise enough to detect or able to remedy.

Infidelity may yet furnish some advocates of a doctrine so monstrous, absurd, and impious ; but whoever sets out with the view of investigating truth, and calls to his aid the lights of revealed religion for that purpose, cannot fail to discover the most harmonious connection between scriptural Christianity and the principles of natural science. Indeed one of the most ennobling and improving pursuits that can occupy the attention of an intellectual being is that of tracing the analogy and harmony between nature and Revelation. Instead of promoting infidelity, nothing is so well adapted to the expansion and elevation of our moral and religious faculties. And besides the religious improvement which is wrought through the agency of this exercise, it is a study, when viewed as a mere means of mental improvement, as a mere sharpener of the intellect, which has not, perhaps its equal in the whole catalogue of sciences. For example, what a mental gymnasium is afforded by reading the works of Augustine, Chillingworth, Locke, Tillotson, Jeremy Taylor, Butler, Edwards, and other like towering spirits. When you have done with such a study, you will not only experience a great moral and religious improvement, and find that you have been drawn nearer to your God, and are already

in a condition to taste and appreciate the joys which only begin where this life ends; but you will find also that all the faculties of the mind, many of them heretofore dormant or torpid, have been expanded, strengthened and drawn into full action. If I might be permitted to degrade this subject, by invoking for it the base and selfish motives of personal interest, I could with truth rest an argument in favour of moral culture upon this ground alone. In addition to the general elevation of our nature, a man finds a reward for a moral and religious life, in the success which generally attends all his worldly occupations. Success in life mostly depends upon confidence, and confidence is mainly the result of virtue, probity and consistency. Commanding talents and profound learning can never supply their place. Confidence is a plant of slow growth, and of the most delicate texture; its tender fibres cannot bear even the touch of slander, while under the blighting influence of suspicion they sicken and die. Virtue is the soil in which it flourishes. Vice itself respects virtue. Those who are lost to moral influences, pay deference to men who are governed by them.

Some of the incidental advantages of a public training may with propriety be enumerated on the present occasion, and considered in connection with the two great, main ends of education which I have feebly attempted to elucidate. One of the most important duties enjoined upon us as creatures of God, and as members of society, is the cultivation of social intercourse, or of loving our neighbours as ourselves; and pre-eminently opposed to this high and sacred duty is the ignoble principle of selfishness. Any pursuit or situation in life, therefore, which tends to promote the one and to suppress the other ought to commend itself to our

special approbation. This result is in no way more effectually accomplished than by the cultivation of noble and generous friendships; and no season or circumstances are better adapted to this purpose than the season of our youth and the circumstances connected with a college life. Here, in early youth, before we have commenced our struggles with the world, or learned the necessity of assiduous attention to our own peculiar interests, friendship, planted in such a soil and fostered by such a season, cannot but prosper and ripen into an abiding, permanent love, which neither length of time nor revolving circumstances can ever change. In after life neither prosperity nor misfortunes, neither honour nor obscurity, neither age nor infirmities, can tear us from the friendships which have been here formed and matured, nor interrupt the calm, smooth current of social intercourse which springs from the youthful heart. As the affectionate child cherishes the tender recollections of its parents and the early joys of home, so do our affections cluster around this endeared spot, and around the memory of those youthful friends who are so indissolubly connected with it. And as a new asterisk is affixed to the name of some college companion, among those that appear upon each returning catalogue, we feel that another star has fallen from the bright galaxy of youthful friendship, and that each of these returning events but tends to increase the gloom and desolation which continue to thicken around us as life advances and cares multiply. Friendship is more than an empty name. It is a feeling that certifies our divine nature. It is allied to love, which is the law of Heaven; and he who fosters the noble emotion is but fulfilling God's commandment. It is then a high and sacred duty that we should endeavour to enlarge the circle of our friends

and to increase our love for them. No situation in life is more favourable to the attainment of both these ends, than the one to which many of you are about to bid a last farewell. The ties of friendship are generally strong in proportion to the trials and difficulties under which they are formed ; and hence friendships originating here are most enduring. For it cannot be denied that our first entrance upon college life involves some of the severest and bitterest sacrifices which we are capable of making, either then or in after life ; and thus the affections here formed, is "*sub sole, sub umbra virens*."

Again, we learn, by mingling with youthful companions, lessons in human nature of incalculable benefit, and which are as enduring as life itself. The guilelessness of youth, when acts are not carefully guarded by the keen eye of experience or restrained by the dictates of selfishness, is peculiarly adapted to the development of the true springs of human action, by which we learn to detect the difference between real and pretended motives, between nature and affectation. The great study of man should be man himself ; for, in the study of human nature, we at once find the field in which the mind is mainly to be employed in its future wide and diversified action. But while this is an important study, it is also a dangerous one ; for in our efforts to become familiar with human nature we are often led into a great and disastrous error, both here and in after life. Many of us suppose that the haunts of folly and wickedness are the only places where the study of human nature can successfully be pursued, and that if we can make ourselves acquainted with the vices of men we have learned their entire nature. In this way we form not only an incorrect and onesided view of the great subject we are investigating, but we become first familiar, then fascina-

ted with vice, and almost unconsciously fall into habits of wickedness, and thus turn the very study which should have been a great instrument in our moral and mental improvement, into the means of accomplishing our ruin. The study of human nature is made the pretext, with some of our boys and young men, for their visits to the gaming table, the race field, the brothel, and such other scenes of iniquity. Here, they say, is to be seen man in all his undisguised deformities; here are to be discovered the sources and origin of human motives. But nothing could be further from the truth. Such scenes are the very hot-beds of deceit and selfishness; and the intemperance and riots, which so often attend them, are but methodized systems of deception.

Lessons of wisdom acquired in such schools, and from such teachers, are purchased at a high price and at a great risk, to say the least. There are persons who suppose they are familiar with the world because they know its vicious propensities. But this knowledge embraces but one and that a dark view of human character; and if we go no further in the investigation, we shall find that instead of reaping improvement from the study, we shall have sustained a positive injury, we shall have acquired a little learning, which will prove a dangerous thing.

An eminent philosophic writer observes: "We generally find indeed, that men are governed by their weaknesses, not their vices; and those weaknesses are often the most amiable part about them. It is a knowledge of these weaknesses, as if by a glance, that serves a man better in the understanding and conquest of his species, than a knowledge of the vices to which they lead; it is better to seize the one cause, than to ponder over the thousand effects." It is the former knowledge

which I chiefly call the knowledge of the world. It is this peculiar insight into human character that should claim our earnest attention. It is this weakness of character which leads us into every species of excess, and it, as the cause, should be studied, in order that vice, which is its effect, should be avoided; and to commence with the study of human depravity is to begin this great pursuit where we should have left it off. Hence we often find that some of the best delineators of human character, the most astute observers of the motives of men, the best analyzers of the heart, are those who know least by practical observation of the vices and depravity of their fellow-men; while on the other hand those who are most familiar with depraved human nature, by actual participation in it, are generally the most ignorant of the causes which lead to such overwhelming and ruinous consequences, of the means of avoiding them, and of the mode of reclaiming fallen man from his evil ways. The acquisition of a knowledge of human character is the precious fruit of this peculiar study, and a young man has not passed through a collegiate course in vain, if he can but realize that he has made material progress in the study of man.

In future life, much, if not the chief part of his success, his happiness and his usefulness, will depend upon the amount which he may possess of this species of knowledge. By it what mastery we possess over our fellow-men! What a pre-eminent position we occupy in all the relations of life! How we triumph in all the conflicts in which human passions are involved! But above all this, while it enables us to discover and guard against the weaknesses of others, to triumph over external difficulties, we are at the same time enabled to enjoy the victory, by bringing our own passions, our

own heart, into perfect subjection, and thus we may tread with confidence the long and bright career that now for the first time is opened to youthful ambition, sustained by an abiding ever-present assurance that we possess the means within ourselves, if we but employ them, of passing safely and triumphantly through life.

As a general rule, it may here be remarked, that the study of the world must of necessity be only commenced during the period of our youth; that perfection in this study can never be attained in this life, however great our progress in it may have been, and that the best teacher we can employ for the purpose is experience. But this knowledge of human nature, as possessed by particular individuals, is often beyond explanation, and cannot be reduced to any rules or system. In some it seems to be a gift of nature, which is not strengthened by after study or experience. Its first developments in early life are as mature as they are in riper years. In vindication of the truth of these remarks, there are many instances on record of this species of intuitive knowledge of human character to which we might refer. For instance, the best anecdotes of the sagacity of Cyrus are those of his boyhood. Talleyrand's childhood was characterized by the same shrewdness which marked his riper years. Congreve had written his comedies at twenty-five. Napoleon was master of the human heart long before he had attained the age of manhood. The unsurpassed poetry of Kirke White, which discovered the deepest knowledge of human motives, was the fruit of his youth.

Having briefly, and I fear with ill success, attempted to enumerate some of the main and incidental designs of education, I might with propriety at this point conclude my address and take my leave of you. But to those who

have already terminated their collegiate career, and to whom my previous remarks may not be specially applicable, I must be permitted to make a few additional observations upon this most important and interesting epoch of their lives.

It seems to me that the present is a period peculiarly interesting and solemn to all those who are for the first time about to enter upon the scenes of life, and who are possessed of reflective and well organized minds, capable of surveying and comprehending the great objects of human existence. It is an elevated spot in the journey, from which you can look back upon the road you have passed; and forward, and indistinctly discern in the hazy future the road which lies before you. On the one hand you behold bright paths and fairy fields, strewn with the flowers of childhood's days, over which you have just passed, but which you shall never traverse again. On the other hand you behold the rugged steeps which are before you in your future career. Oh! what revolutions in feelings, in motives, in purposes, in sympathies await you! Now you are gay and happy; with bosoms unmoistened by the tears of sorrow, unclouded by misfortune. But in a few years more how will it be with you? Where will the vicissitudes of life have led you? To honour, to disgrace, or to sorrow? If friendship, or the cause of literature, in after years, shall summon you once more to meet in affectionate communion upon this hallowed spot, what response will be made to the call, and where shall you be found? The voice of Fame would answer, and echoing back would direct us to the summit of distinction and power, where many of you would be in the full exercise of those virtues which adorn the head and heart! The voice of inexorable Death would thunder beneath our feet, and

glory in the number and richness of his spoil! Nor would Misfortune be silent, but with eyes bedewed with tears, and cheeks furrowed by the share of sorrow, would number many in her weeping train. But rather far let Death and Misfortune claim you, than that you should be numbered on the catalogue of crime! Before you advance far upon your future journey, disappointment, sorrow, bereavement, care, infirmity, ill-health, will one by one unite themselves to your train, and as inseparable companions some of them will attend you through life; and, unless banished by the aid of religion and philosophy, will certainly surround you, and add new terrors to your bed of death. Has Education armed you with the weapons by which to resist and finally to conquer these enemies? Are your head and your heart well stored for the journey upon which you are about to enter? Have you consented to receive the good things which your Alma Mater is always ready so abundantly to lavish upon her sons?

A young man then who is about to enter upon the troubled sea of life, richly freighted with the golden fruits of education, is transcendently blessed. But let him not fall into the error of a false reliance upon his honourable and noble acquirements, as supposing that in these are to be found a safeguard against every danger, or a means for surmounting every difficulty. It cannot be questioned that they will prove the most valuable aid that human ingenuity could devise, in every trial or difficulty; but that they will be an antidote for all the ills of life, or render labour of mind or body unnecessary or unavailing in his future pursuits, is not for one moment contended.

The first and by far the most important step which you are to take is to make choice of a pursuit or profes-

sion. It is lamentable that this step is often taken without due consideration of the true character of the profession you may have selected, or your intellectual or physical adaptation for pursuing it successfully. This error is often attended by the saddest consequences. It dooms many to obscurity and want who otherwise might have been eminently successful. There are two prevailing errors upon this subject, which are the very opposite of each other. By some it is supposed that a brilliant intellect and an accomplished education have no field suited to them, other than the pursuit of one of the learned professions; while, on the other hand, many believe, that distinction in these professions is alike accessible to all, and that no previous mental cultivation is specially necessary for attaining their highest positions. Law, medicine, and divinity have been termed the learned professions. When we look around and see who compose these professions; when we observe the ignorance, the stupidity, and the narrow-minded prejudice, which prevail in each one of them, we must admit that it is a great perversion of terms to call them "learned professions." The epithet, *learned*, as applied to those professions, had its origin in times long since past, when doubtless there was some fitness in its application. But now, among certain classes, no peculiar excellence is necessary to make a lawyer, a physician, or a clergyman. Many gentlemen of the "learned" professions of the present day, have never received the benefits of an ordinary education, are neither self-taught (as are many of our greatest men), nor trained by the teachings of others. The knowledge which they arrogate to themselves they claim as if by inspiration from Heaven. Some are in the full possession, they suppose, of all the elements of

distinction for their future profession from their birth, and it is very often the case that neither time, nor their future acquirements tend, in the slightest degree, to increase their claims to eminence. Others, finding themselves unfit for other pursuits, or too indolent to live by labour, seek a refuge for imbecility, idleness and ignorance under the cloak of one of the "learned professions." If the son of a man in the humbler walks of life evinces any signs of genius before he is five years old; whether it be the result of accident or not, his name is at once enrolled for one of the learned professions, and the labour, economy and self-denial of his parents are from that moment dedicated to the preparation of their son for his entrance upon the new sphere of action. On the other hand, the sons of all men, with few exceptions, in the higher circles of life, as they are termed, are, long before they are born, designated for the same honourable distinction; as being the only proper pursuit for men in their exalted position in society; and this determination is afterwards obstinately persisted in, without any reference to their future intellectual developments. In this way these dignified and honourable professions are converted into a sort of Alms House, for the reception of the blind, halt, and pauper intellects of our country. When we reflect how delicate, how important, how vital are the interests, whether they relate to time or eternity, which are committed to the keeping of the men who compose these professions, and how inadequate they often are to discharge the high and sacred duty, we are led to exclaim in bitterness, that such a condition of things should not exist. The choicest intellect, the purest moral character, the most vigorous constitution, united with the highest condition of culture in each, will

find in the study of any one of the learned professions a field amply large and fertile to call forth the best efforts which they may be capable of invoking.

On the other hand, it is a great error to suppose that there are no pursuits in life worthy of the high calling of a scholar and a student, other than the learned professions. Of necessity but a small portion of mankind can find profitable employment as professional men; and it certainly could never have been the design of the Great Author of the universe that nine-tenths or more of the human family should be endowed with intellectual faculties for no other purpose than that they should remain forever dormant, or discharge functions of the brute. I am aware that there are some enemies of human rights, who assert and maintain an opposite doctrine, and who advocate the slavery and debasement of the human mind, as better suited to the labouring portion of society, or "the hewers of wood and drawers of water." Thanks be to the Giver of all good, that we live in a country in whose soil such doctrines can never find root, and in an age that will chill and blight the budding of such sentiments.

The mind of man can find something to employ it in every pursuit of life however humble; and every occupation can be elevated and more successfully followed by invoking the aid of the mental faculties. What pursuit affords a better field for the study of science, and for the general improvement of the mind, than an enlightened system of agriculture? Of all the occupations which can employ the attention of man, none affords greater facilities for the development of the noblest faculties of the mind and heart than agriculture. None is so free from temptations; none more honourable; none attended with more happiness; none better adapted to

the cultivation of social pleasures, or of an affectionate and reciprocal interchange of sentiment and opinion ; none so well fitted to elevate and expand our ideas of the Deity, or to promote a love for, and an obedience to his great laws !

“ Give me, indulgent gods ! with mind serene,
And guiltless heart, to range the sylvan scene ;
No splendid poverty, no smiling care,
No well-bred hate, or servile grandeur there ;
The pleasing objects useful thoughts suggest.
The sense is ravish'd and the soul is blest ;
On every thorn delightful wisdom glows,
In every rill a sweet instruction flows.”

Yet there are some who would consign this ennobling pursuit to serfs and vassals, and close up this bright avenue which leads to refinement and wisdom, against all but the most degraded of our species.

Agriculture and civilization have through all time advanced hand in hand, and have ever been inseparable companions ; and when the former is suffered by a people to languish, it is a certain indication that they are in danger of relapsing into a state of barbarism, and that refinement, science and literature, and all the arts of peace, have attained their acme, and have begun and must thenceforward continue to recede. The conditions of all the nations of the earth at present attest the truth of these remarks, and they are equally applicable to the nations of antiquity. The ancient Romans in the days of their glory and power were so devoted to agriculture that their most illustrious commanders were sometimes called from the plough. Their refined and enlightened senators commonly resided in the country, and cultivated the ground with their own hands ; and, among all classes of society, to be a good husbandman was accounted the highest praise. A noble Roman was overwhelmed with tears on being obliged to accept the

consulship because it would deprive him for one year of the opportunity of cultivating his fields.

Shakspeare, with as much truth as beauty, says in regard to a rational and rural solitude :

“Hath not old custom made this life more sweet
Than that of painted pomp ? Are not these woods
More free from poril than the envious court ?
And this our life, exempt from public haunt,
Finds tongues in trees, books in the running brooks,
Sermons in stones, and good in every thing.”

The mechanic arts, every one of them to a greater or less degree, are governed by scientific principles, and cannot be successfully pursued without a certain amount of mental cultivation. No limits can be assigned to the improvements which might be made in every art, were the lights of science and of education allowed to shine upon them ; and that which is now but a process of dull and painful imitation, might, by the application of a cultivated mind, become a pleasing study, which would be constantly developing some new principle in science, and furnishing fresh food for the mind to feed upon. Hence I assume the position, that education is designed by Providence as a means for the elevation of the entire human family, or of as many as can attain to it, and that its blessings and honours are not to be confined to a favoured few.

In this country the road to station, honour and fame is alike open to all, and although it may appear at first inaccessible, yet every obstacle which is encountered, however formidable, must yield to the power of an educated mind, when united with industry and perseverance. All the high places in our land may seem to be filled, and their honours to be appropriated ; thousands of anxious expectants may be before you crowding every avenue which leads to distinction and power ; but

let not honourable ambition falter in her efforts, nor talents and virtue be dismayed. Keep before you the result of the contest which Æneas invited among the Trojan marksmen, which Virgil has made you familiar with, and which so aptly illustrates the value of perseverance and resoluteness. A dove was suspended to the mast of a ship, at which the competitors for the prize were to direct their arrows. The son of Hyrtacus first wins applause by planting his arrow in the trembling mast, near the affrighted bird. Mnestheus next tries his skill, and with well directed aim severs the cord, and the liberated dove penetrates the clouds above. Not daunted, Eurytion, in eager haste, lets fly his arrow, as he beholds the joyful dove in the open sky, and piercing her, brings her to the earth, "having left her life," as Virgil beautifully expresses it, "among the stars of Heaven." Acestes alone remained after the prize was supposed to be lost; but instead of yielding the contest, or giving way to disappointment or mortification, with a manner of confident superiority he discharged his shaft into the heavens, which took fire, and with a flame, marked its path, till being consumed it was lost in air. The spectators were filled with astonishment, and Æneas, appreciating the omen, embraces Acestes, and in the presence of the applauding multitude thus awards him the prize:

"—— Nam te voluit Rex magnus Olympi
Talibus auspiciis exsortem ducere honorem."

And you, my young friends, when you terminate your sojourn here, are to go into the world as apostles, if not to preach the gospel, to fulfil a duty which in importance is only second to it, namely, to shed upon your fellow men the blessed influences of an educated and enlightened mind.

Independently of the immediate and direct advantages of education, its incidental benefits to an American citizen are of the deepest importance. Every man in every walk in life in a republican government like ours, ought, if possible, to have the benefits of a liberal education, to aid him as a weapon of defence, in maintaining the institutions and liberties of his country. It is the corner stone of our republican edifice that the people are the source of all power in our land. From them flow the liberty, the virtue, the honour, the law, the power, which so elevate us among the nations of the earth. Let us then by education keep that fountain pure and perpetual, that streams may flow therefrom blessing and elevating the whole race of mankind. When that source becomes polluted or obstructed, then will our Tree of Liberty, which has so long been nourished and sustained by its waters, languish and die. He that would deny that education in this country with its exhaustless fruits is a national right, in which all our people have a common interest, would question the very principles upon which the government itself stands. The principles of our government are as plain and simple as they are beautiful and wise, and a knowledge of them is accessible to almost every citizen. There are those however who seek to veil these beautiful features in mystery, and rob them of their original simplicity, by engrafting upon them features that are foreign and hostile to their nature. Our system of government is rather a negative than a positive system. It is a government of protection, not of privilege; one established to guard rights, rather than to bestow them. It is one of the high prerogatives of education in our republican country to guard against the inroads which are daily threatened, upon this harmony and simplicity in our institutions; to keep the

government in its proper and legitimate channel, to see that the rights of the governed are protected, and that privileges are extended unjustly to none; to see that the constitution, the Magna Charta of our liberties, is preserved in all its original purity; to prevent the introduction of cunningly devised schemes, by which one class of our community is to be advanced or enriched at the expense of another; guard and prevent the government from so far leaving its proper sphere of action as to attempt to direct, or in any way to interfere with the industry or private pursuits of the country; so that all its powers and energies may be directed to the protection of the liberty, the laws, and the property of its people.

Yes, my young friends, such are some of the delicate and momentous interests which are committed to the keeping of the educated youth of our land. In your hands, not as politicians and partizans, but as citizens and voters, is this sacred trust reposed; to you are entrusted the principles of our government and the rights of the people: and the high and responsible duty will be discharged with entire success if education has but performed its functions upon your youthful heads and hearts.

The duties and designs of education are as varied and as complex as they are honourable and ennobling. It should be present and minister on every occasion, in every scene, and in every enterprise having in view the elevation of human nature or the promotion of happiness. It fosters virtue, it develops science, it expands the heart, it elevates our ideas of God and draws us nearer to him, it benefits our fellow men, it destroys the reigning prejudices and corrects the prevailing errors of our age and country; in short it is a fountain of blessed influ-

ences which flows directly from the mercy seat of the Giver of every good and perfect gift. And, in taking my leave of you, perhaps forever, what happiness should I experience, could I but know that I had succeeded in awakening your hearts to a proper appreciation of this momentous subject, in guarding you against the fatal error of supposing that, at this period of your life, you might discontinue the noble work you have commenced, or of falling into an ignoble and degrading mental inactivity, by which the budding fruits of your early labours must wither and die, long before the season for their ripening has arrived.

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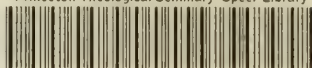
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